



SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT NEWS RELEASE

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SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES NEW POLICY CONCERNING UNLOCKING VEHICLES

The Salem Police Department announced today that it will no longer “unlock” vehicles in which citizens have inadvertently locked their keys or belongings. The new policy will go into effect February 1, 2009.

“We will not quit answering a call of need from our citizens, but instead of opening the door we will now furnish the person with a list of five locksmiths and the information they need to get into their car safely,” says Salem Police Chief, James R. Bryant.

For years, Salem has been one of the only localities in the Commonwealth to open car doors with tools like the *Slim Jim*, but liability concerns coupled with the increased sophistication of today’s automobiles have made providing this service increasingly difficult.

Nationwide studies have shown that even the most experienced officer can accidentally damage a locking mechanism or disconnect an air bag while unlocking a door. The door designs on many late model cars have changed to the point that a window can easily be broken if too much pressure is exerted, and at the very least, it is tough to attempt the unlocking process without compromising the weather stripping around the door frame.

“The Salem Police Department will always be dedicated to providing our citizens with great service, but the advanced engineering techniques have gotten so technical that it’s really impossible for us to do this safely and effectively,” says Bryant.

In the first 10 months of 2008, Salem Police responded to a staggering 903 calls concerning locked vehicles.

“Our officers will continue to assess each situation when they’re called, and if they come across an emergency like a child locked inside a car needing attention, then they will take appropriate action,” he says. “We just can no longer arbitrarily open car doors.

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